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***"Chi è questa que ven, ch'ogn'om la mira" from S ol, i de dol***  
**Jaume V Allcorbaplana**

**Catalan Review, Vol. I, number 1, (1986), p. 253-272**

“CHI È QUESTA QUE VÈN, CH’OGN’OM LA MIRA”  
FROM SOL, I DE DOL

JAUME VALLCORBA-PLANA

CHI È QUESTA QUE VÈN, CH’OGN’OM LA MIRA

*Chi è questa che vèn, ch’ogn’om la mira,  
Che fa tremar di chiaritate l’âre  
E mena seco Amor, sì che parlare  
Null’omo pote, ma ciascun sospira?*

(GUIDO CAVALCANTI)

*Axi-m te pres e liats en son carçre  
Amors ardents, com si stes en hun coffre  
Tancat jus claus, e tot mon cors fos dintre,  
On no pusques mover per null encontre...*

(JORDI DE SANT JORDI)

I

Entre els morats i l’ocre, en carrer clos,  
A sol morent, arribes tu, llunyana;  
Calla l’ocell, la font i la campana,  
I al teu petjar hi ha un defallir de flors.

- 5 De pedra els ulls i el cor veire de plors,  
Só el transeünt sense arma ni cabana  
Amb heretats a la Més Alta Plana,  
Del món novell el singular reclòs.

- M'exalta el pler, mes l'angoixa m'atura  
10 En l'abismal moment. Tu, indolent,  
Sense demà ni enllà, del Tot captura,

Rael i flor d'incorrupta natura,  
Forma uniforme amb semença de ment,  
Ets en ma carn l'Immutable Present.

(Amid purples and ochre, down a dead-end street  
As evening falls, you approach from afar;  
Hushed are the bird, the fount and the churchbell,  
And at your tread there's a swooning of flowers.

- 5 With eyes of stone, my heart a glass of sobs  
I'm a wanderer, bereft of weapons and of shelter  
With inherited lands on the Highest Plateau,  
The one and only recluse in a newborn world.

- Pleasure exalts me, but anguish stops me short  
10 In the abysmal moment. You, so indolent,  
Without tomorrow or beyond, captive of the All.

Root and flower of nature uncorrupted,  
Uniform form with seed of the mind,  
You are in my flesh the Immutable Present.)

*Translated by David Rosenthal*

## II

En port travat ets l'algosa claperà  
Verda en verds morts a l'enyorat aiguall;  
Et vull i no, i d'un roc faig cavall  
Per a atènyer, de nit, selva i quimera.

- 5 En port obert ets boira marinera  
Vora el torrent, amb l'alba per mirall;  
Dic el teu nom esquerp, per cala i vall,  
I ador l'absurd pels clots de Tavellera.

- Só l'home antic; i tu, l'ara i l'oracle  
10 D'una dea sense aura ni miracle,  
Tronc d'un menhir en el coval impur;

Ombres d'un flam tu i jo al tombant d'un mur,  
No som, vençut l'Instant, suma complexa:  
—Despulla els ulls i, casta, vela el sexe!

(In an impeded port, thou art algal rock  
green amid dead green in the desired marsh;  
thee I want not and do, and vault from a rock  
to attain with the night, jungle and chimera.

- 5 In an open port, thou art a sailing mist  
that borders the stream, with dawn for a glass;  
I say thy rough name in creek and in vale  
and adore the absurd in Tavellera's coves.

- I am the ancient; thou, altar and oracle  
10 of a goddess that aura and miracle lacks,  
trunk of a *menhir* in the defiled cave;

Shades of a flame, thou and I, in a wall's bend  
are not, vanquished the Instant, complex epitome:  
—Uncover the eyes and, chaste, veil the sex!)

*Translated by Louis J. Rodrigues*

### III

A tu, reflex d'un altre tu en clausura,  
 Nu sense estany en pradell immortal,  
 Una en el flam, mes, de tan casta, impura,  
 Redol ombrós en vila sense hostal:

- 5 ¿Imploraré ma pròpia captura  
 Agemolit, com si una mà cabdal  
 M'assenyalés fora clos i segura  
 El continent clarós que ignora el mal?

Si el real és la pura coneixença,

- 10 Tu no ets tu —singular accident,  
 Rastre imprecís en boscatge inclement—.

En tu i en mi, externs, a l'hora tensa,  
 Solc d'absolut d'una Alta Complaença,  
 Crema el Perfet amb flamejar de ment.

(Of you, reflection of another captive you,  
 Naked without a pool in an immortal plain,  
 In passion one, but, being so chaste, impure,  
 Shady circle in a town without an inn:

- 5 Shall I implore my own arrest  
 Resigned, as if a mighty hand  
 Shows me outside the walls, and sure,  
 The clear continent that knows no evil?

If pure knowledge were reality,

- 10 You are not you —singular accident,  
 Unsure track in an unfriendly wood—

In you and me, externals, at the crucial hour,  
 Absolute furrow of a Grand Complacency,  
 The Perfect burns yet with mental flames.)

*Translated by Louis J. Rodrigues*

# IV

¿A quin abís tots dos, a quin repòs,  
Entre clarors de sal en vasta platja,  
Ens vam conèixer en equívoca imatge  
I en cels innats junyíem cos i plors?

- 5 Sol cadascú en l'introbable clos,  
Absent la ment en insòlit paratge,  
Uns en l'engany però, a sang i oratge  
Al vall ermós collíem falses flors.

- ¿Fores en mi la fútil aparença,  
10 Aigua i abís en areny imprecís,  
O regueró de foc en horta i brulls?

En la sopor de l'alta coneixença  
Veig Arbre i Fruit, Serpent i Paradís  
A les cales secretes dels teus ulls.

(In which abyss did we two, in which respite,  
Mid clarities of salt on a vast strand,  
In image vague each other know  
And tears and body join in innate skies?

- 5 Each one alone in hidden enclosure,  
The mind elsewhere in an unwonted place,  
Ones in the trick but, of blood and wind  
In the barren vale we culled false flowers.
- Couldst thou be futile likelihood in me,  
10 Water and abyss in a sandpit imprecise  
Or furrow of fire in fields and brush?

In the lethargy of lofty consciousness  
I see Tree and Fruit, Serpent and Paradise  
In the secret inlets of thine eyes.)

*Translated by Louis J. Rodrigues*



¿Com és la carn, guanyat el goig, d'inerta  
 Que ens som estranys en ignorat jardí  
 I rebutgem, sedents, nèctars i vi  
 Enyoradissos d'una deu incerta?

- 5 ¿Quin gai tremir de veus en nit coberta  
 Ens ajuntà clement, com si el morir  
 Fos per tu i jo integrats, lllindar i camí  
 D'alba latent dellà l'angoixa oberta?

- Aquestes veus, i el mar, i el moviment  
 10 De llums i tons somorts a l'aventura,  
 Són un fendir l'Instant amb el seny mort.

Closos els ulls, i al dolç batec del cor,  
 Vivim, enllà del Temps, l'altre Element  
 Amb aigua i foc, i vents sense captura.

(Is not the flesh, won of delight, inert  
 So that we are strangers to each other in an unknown  
 garden  
 And we shun, being thirsty, nectar and wine,  
 Nostalgic for an uncertain spring?)

- 5 What gay tremor of voices in the covert night  
 Tenderly united us, just as if Death  
 Made you and me one, threshold and path  
 Of latent dawn beyond the open anguish?  
 These voices, and the sea, and the motion  
 10 Of lights and tones fading, haphazardly,  
 Split the Instant with dead wisdom.

Eyes shut, and with sweet throbbing heart,  
 we live, beyond Time, the other element,  
 with water and fire, and winds without restraint.)

*Translated by Louis J. Rodrigues*

# VI

¿Qui em viu en tu amb joia inseparable,  
Que em trob més sol quan, de ta forma esclau,  
De mar i llum i atzur faig el palau  
Que als ulls de tots és jaç grosser i estable?

- 5 ¿Qui en mi et gaudeix i al misteri s'atansa  
Com si jo fos, absent, pelló i clofoll  
D'un fruit secret ocult en auri boll  
O lleu parrac d'un cos sense esperança?

- En camp gebrat som càlida sorgent,  
10 Graner petjat per un déu evident,  
Solc immortal d'una estranya semença;

I quan ma carn al teu desig s'avença,  
Som, en el joc, astral pressentiment  
D'ésser els lliberts de l'Etern Permanent.

(Who lives me in you with inseparable joy  
That finds me more alone when, a slave to your form  
Of sea, light, and azure, I construct the palace  
That in everyone's eyes is a pallet and stable?)

- 5 Who enjoys you in me, drawing close to your mystery  
As though I were, absent, the shell and the skin  
Of a secret fruit concealed in a golden husk  
Of flimsy rags on a body without hope?

- We're a warm bud sprouting in a frost-covered field,  
10 A granary trod by an evident god,  
Immortal furrow sown with mysterious seed;

And when my flesh overtakes your desire  
We are, in the game, the astral presentment  
That we are free from the Eternal Permanent.)

*Translated by David Rosenthal*



When Eugeni d'Ors affirmed that "anything that departs from tradition is plagiarism," he no doubt meant that no literary work can stand on its own, but must instead be brought to life by the reader; the reader will detect echoes in the work, bonds which will serve as guideposts to the intelligent process and which, along the way, will anticipate the landscape about to emerge. I am not referring to specific phrases or lines — nothing is more disheartening than an exact prediction of the line to come — but rather to the referential world whereby the author tells the reader exactly whom he's up against.

Through this process of intelligent recognition and the certainty of its pertinence, what we read takes on volume and dimension. To the dual axes of the present is added a perpendicular axis of time — i.e. tradition —, a dynamic dimension which links present and past, but also projects into the future, though on a continuum which, rather than progressive, is, as T. S. Eliot would have it, *simultaneous*, weaving a web of reciprocal and meaningful implications.

Curiously, those works of Foix's with more cultural allusions have tended to be studied from a literal viewpoint, taking little notice of the many references they contain. Even the epigraphs which precede each section of these books have more often been seen as mere decorative accompaniments rather than keys to meaning.<sup>1</sup>

If, in fact, these epigraphs do belong at the head of each

<sup>1</sup>A well-known Catalan philologist recently wrote, in reference to the third section of *Sol, i de dol* that "both epigraphs [the quotations of Cavalcanti and Jordi de Sant Jordi] which are about love and focused on the praise of woman and her attributes, naturally [*sic*] fit perfectly with the section as a whole". Josep Romeu i Figueras, "*Sol, i de dol*", de J. V. Foix, Barcelona, Empúries, "Les Naus d'Empúries-Quaderns de navegació", 6, 1985, 46.

section, it can only be as guides to meaning (rather than any other question of taste): in, the poem by Cavalcanti which precedes the third section of *Sol, i de dol* — leaving aside for the moment its specific connection with the first stanza of the first poem —, poetry must be seen as an introspective path of love, and love as a source of moral improvement, a spurring on towards perfection, by means of an archetypal and almost symbolic woman. This orientation is even more necessary in a book like *Sol, i de dol* which contains sections where love is treated in a much more summery, sporting, direct and expansive way, with named characters. The stanza from Jordi de Sant Jordi's *Estramps* is an indication of the all-encompassing nature of the analysis the poet offers us in this section.

Though it may be a tempting to see the poems in this section as directly indebted to the Stilnovista tradition (and that would, of course, mean ignoring the significance of the Valencian poet's inclusion), the direct reference to "pler" (I, 9: pleasure) should be sufficient evidence that the poet proposes a considerable broadening of the field of experience charted out by Stilnovisti. Gimferrer noted the presence in this group of sonnets of many of the concepts behind Platonism and Neoplatonism,<sup>2</sup> and, in fact, the poems abound with such references; not just the twelfth line of the second poem: "Ombres d'un flam tu i jo al tombant d'un mur" (Shadows of a flame you and I just beyond a wall), obviously indebted to the images used in the myth of the cave in *The Republic*; nor the first line of the third poem, where the woman he depicts is presented as a contingency, a copy of the ideal: "A tu, reflex d'un altre tu en clausura" (To you, reflection of another you, cloistered); but also the no less important and repeatedly expressed desire of

<sup>2</sup>Pere Gimferrer, *La poesia de J. V. Foix*, Barcelona, Ed. 62, 1974. 125-6.



the poet to achieve perfect knowledge; that which, in an imperfect world, is hidden from us by the veil of the bodily senses which are only capable of grasping accidental manifestations of reality. Two good examples of this are III, 9-11: "Si el real és la pura coneixença, Tu no ets tu —singular accident, Rastre imprecís en boscatge inclement—" (If what is real is pure knowledge, You are not you —unique accident, Imprecise trace in inclement wood—.); and the poet's protest, in I, 5-8, about the painful longing which accompanies the search for the ideal, what with all the limitations and obstacles which the body itself and this imperfect, illusory world put in our way. Unable to *see* fully ("de pedra els ulls"— of stone, my eyes) he can only visualise his heart — that is, his conscience and consciousness — as a "veire de plors" (cup of tears), with no weapons to defend itself and no corner in which to find shelter in this lower world of transition to the higher (the qualifier "singular" does not, I believe, express exclusivity, referring instead to the solitude which the poet communicates throughout, starting with the title itself). Only when freed from the heavy burden of the body, far from this temporal, created world (the "món novell" — newborn world), can he aspire to the inheritance of the "Més Alta Plana" (Highest Plain), allegorical territory in which it becomes difficult to imagine geographical features, not only because of the capital letters which define it, but also for its origin — probably indirect — in the plain Plato speaks of in Book X of *The Republic* (614b & cc), a place where souls freed from their bodies, the possessors of total knowledge, meet; the region to which the gods guide those souls which, in life, have followed a path of purity and restraint (*Phaedo*, 108c).<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup>Romeu, surprisingly, states that the poet told him that the "Higher Plain" was a reference to the Torrents de Lladurs, where his ancestors were

In this brief section the poet engages in a type of introspection which points to love as an obstacle to, or as a path towards, the perfection of pure knowledge, defined with particular precision by Gimferrer as "a vehicle towards the fullness of knowledge, towards fusion with the whole".<sup>4</sup> Thus, rather than as individual experience, the poet analyzes love as an abstract, metaphysical vehicle. It was also Gimferrer who compared the fifth sonnet with a poem by Francisco de Aldana, "¿Cuál es la causa, mi Damón, que estando ...", though he was careful to observe that "the meanings of the two sonnets are antagonic in their responses to the question of the validity of the erotic experience: Aldana's sonnet confirms it as fleeting, while Foix's affirms its perenniality."<sup>5</sup> In fact, the source of Aldana's poem — which, incidentally, was overlooked —<sup>6</sup> is a passage from a *Dialogo d'amore* by Sperone Speroni which I reproduce here as it amply demonstrates a tradition of thinking which shaped many Renaissance lyrical works:

La carne e l'ossa di che noi siamo formati con la loro imperfezione sono cagioni di farci sentire di quegli effetti miracolosi: che com'ora non è giorno per tutt'il mondo ma il nostro vespro è mezza notte ad altrui e la sera di questo emisferio è l'alba dell'altro, il che è perciò che altro corpo è la terra che noi calchiamo e altro il cielo e altro l'aere che ne circonda, questa opaca, quei trasparenti; così è cosa impossibile che in un punto medesimo

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from; given this information, Romeu makes a connection — albeit without giving any explanations — between this sonnet and the first and seventh sonnet of the first section of the book and thus understands the "new world" to which Foix refers, as modernity (*op. cit.*, 47). Be that as it may, the "torrents" are never on the plains.

<sup>4</sup>Pere Gimferrer, *op. cit.*, 124.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, 161-164.

<sup>6</sup>See F. de Aldana, *Poesías castellanas completas*, ed. José Lara Garrido, Madrid, Cátedra, 1985, 201.



gli occhi, il tatto e l'orecchie del nostro corpo, cose diverse e materiali, faccia amor liete delle sue gioie. Né di ciò vi dovete meravigliare, quando, comunque l'uomo tocchi la donna sua, non empie mai la sua voglia, ma, allegro e sazio nelle parti di fuori, nelle interne, ove non giunge il piacere, tristo e bramoso se ne rimane. Vorrebbe adunque l'amante non abbracciare la cosa amata, ma vivo e intero per entro lei penetrare, non altramente che l'acqua passi la spugna; ne ciò fare potendo, nel mezzo posto d'ogni sua gioia, geme e sospira di disiderio.<sup>7</sup>

That is to say that the union of lovers is unsatisfactory because in satiating the body it has been unable to unite the souls and take them to that higher plane; in other words, for Speroni, that which gratifies the body can never gratify the worthiest part of man, his soul. Or, as Foix puts it (II, 13), "No som, vençut l'Instant, suma complexa" (We are not, once the Moment expires, a complex whole). (And I question whether "Instant" should not be in lower case, since the experience it refers to is obviously transitory rather than transcendental.)

In any case, the first part of the section seems to be organised dialectically around the tension between love's role as a source of disillusionment, yet also as a gateway to knowledge. If I may make use of a painter much loved by Foix, Raffaello d'Urbino (to whom Foix refers in fact in *Sol, i de dol* as "The most divine of all" — "Quatre colors aparien el món" (The world is of four colors) — love seems to appear as to the sleeping Scipio (*Scipio's dream*, London, National Gallery): at the foot of a laurel Scipio is dreaming. Around him are two women. The woman on the right is austere, her hair tied back, her pose tense. She is close to Scipio's head, offering him a book and a sword. The woman on the left, her hair loose, is

<sup>7</sup>Sperone Speroni, *Dialogo d'amore*, in *Trattadisti del cinquecento*, ed. Mario Pozzi, Milan-Naples, Riccardo Ricciardi, 1978, 530.



more ornate and bejewelled and also more beautiful; she is offering Scipio a flower. These three elements — book, sword and flower — must be the three forces of the human soul: intelligence, strength and sensibility, or, to use Platonic terms, mind, courage and desire.<sup>8</sup> If we examine the first poem in the section, the woman<sup>9</sup> is introduced in the first quatrain which is clearly linked to the Cavalcanti quatrain which introduces the section, yet it goes even further. It is important to note the attributes Foix bestows on the woman in the two tercets: captive of the Whole, alien to the temporal, corruptible world ("sense demà ni enllà" — with no tomorrow and no beyond) she is the root and flower of undying nature, and she is immutable (with "forma uniforme" — uniform shape). It is clear that the effect she produces in Foix is centered primarily in the intellect; not simply because of the setting in which she appears, painted in tones that contain no hint of passion, an enclosed place at dusk (a setting yet further distanced from "Immanent" space by the faint light she latter is accorded), but also because of his use of images drawn from *Timaeus* (90a-b): "With regard to the nature of the soul dominant in each of us, it is important to note: God has made a gift of it to each one of us as if of divine genius. It is the principle of which it has been said that it inhabits the most elevated part

<sup>8</sup>Cf. Edgar Wind, *Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance*, London, Faber and Faber, 1968, Chapter V. If the flower does in fact represent the senses it is then much easier to understand the difficult image in I, 4: the "defallir de flors" (wilting of flowers) indicates the strongly intellectual rather than sensual aspect of the apparition.

<sup>9</sup>And not the lady! Courtly chivalric love plays no role in these poems, nor, for the most part, in any of Foix's poems in spite of the fact that someone might stubbornly insist otherwise. Cf. Manuel Carbonell, *Divuit sonets de Sol, i de dol, comentats*, Barcelona, Ed. 62, "El Garbell", 15, 1985.

of our body. Thus we can truly claim that this soul elevates us above the earth [hence explaining the world's silence projected in the bird, the fountain and the bell of the third line] due to its affinity with the sky, as we are not a terrestrial *plant*, rather a celestial one. And, indeed, it is from above, from the place of the primal birth of the soul that God has suspended our heads, *which are like our roots*" (my emphasis). The woman here, then, acts upon the higher, intellectual side of the poet's soul. And if I may continue the passage from *Timaeus*, 90 b-c, Plato claims that for those who have cultivated their own love of true thought, for those who "have primarily exercised the capacity to think on divine immortal things ... it is absolutely necessary that, to the extent to which human nature can participate in immortality, enjoyment of it should be complete." This suggests an explanation for the sonnet's final declarations that the woman is, in the poet's flesh (that is, in his human nature) the "Immutable Present" (that which makes him intuit and enjoy immortality). Of course, this has been made possible, in this sonnet, by the conscious rejection of the exaltations of pleasure, of the concessions to desire that make the spirit lose its bearings.

Love appears in this poem as a *daemon*, an intermediary between the world of the Whole and man which also, again according to *Timaeus* (41c), contains a seed of the Immortal Mind. It is described in the same way by Foix (I, 13) who establishes a deep identification between this woman and the *daemon* — whose sole function is as go-between and link — between the higher world and the lower world.

We see, then, that the universe which Foix presents is based on a particular mental alchemy rather than on contingent experience. Even the Neoplatonic writings of Pico della Mirandola (*De Amore*, III, iii) sought to portray love as a permanent link, the binding of the universe ("amor nodus perpe-



tuus et copula mundi"), the keystone of the exchange and movement of divine gifts. The dialectical rhythm of this exchange is perfectly captured in the figure of the Three Graces of Chrysipus, not, however, seen as the Stoics' symbol of liberality, but rather as the Neoplatonists' symbol of Love.<sup>10</sup>

And, thus, Pico della Mirandola has the Three Graces engraved on the back of his medal with the names "Pulchritudo", "Amor" and "Voluptas". Love, whose arms embrace Beauty and Desire, serves as the intermediary between the two. Thus, Desire in the absence of Beauty would not be Love but simply animal passion, while Beauty alone, without Love, would be an abstraction, an unattainable entity. This is why I believe that in the second sonnet of the section, woman is compared to that which is transient and therefore imperfect; from this there is the natural progression to the idea of woman as a "false godness". As they are "shadows ... just beyond a wall" with no connection to the intellectual spirit, the desire she awakens must be transcended. The dynamics set in motion by this woman still evoke Raphael; she is an earthly figure ("mossy patch", "rock", "mist", &c.) which is why her charm is only the altar and oracle of a goddess who can only promise that which is mortal (*Timaeus* 90b-c), sensuality which is not transcendent. The final rejection, then, must be seen as the result of her being excessively corporeal and not at all of the intellect and thus the sonnet closes with a very clear recommendation: "Despulla els ulls i, casta, vela el sexe!" (Bare your eyes and, chaste, cover your parts!). The eyes can be seen in this sonnet, as in the first, as a metonymic device representing receptivity to the world of the intellect which can only be achieved by the leaving behind of earthly encumbrances. The

<sup>10</sup>See Edgar Wind, *op. cit.*, Chapter III.

reference to "sexe", to covering her genitals, can be interpreted as Desire without Love. I don't believe, then, that this is meant overtly to represent a confrontation of two concepts of love as in Pausanias' *Banquet* (180d and cc); that is, the confrontation of two concepts of love personified in two Venuses, the celestial or Uranian Venus and the earthly, popular Venus (what some critics refer to as "pure love" versus "carnal love", with the understanding that the first increases in inverse proportion to pelvic proximity). The purity which is being sought after has more to do with the progression to a higher plane (and, I emphasize, I do not attach any of the conventional morality to the term "higher plane") which that love is capable of inspiring; with freeing oneself from the mental shackles imposed by the base world of the senses.

The third sonnet, in fact, demonstrates this duality and suggests a solution. Here, "Pulchritudo" and "Voluptas", in other words, Mind and Desire, are related but absolutely separate. In neither of the two options alone does the poet find what he is seeking. The two "you's" of the first line, one a reflection and the other reflected and separated from the world, are each in and of themselves insufficient: the "you"-reflection, because it is accident and not essence (cf. line 10); the reflected "you", nude on an immortal plain, One without mixture, by definition chaste — "de tan casta, impura" (so chaste, as to be impure) —, unreachable from the strictly human perspective. The question posed in the first tercet is clearly addressed to the you-reflection, "redol ombrós en vila sense hostal" (shadowy spot in a town without an inn); she certainly is not the one to show him the essence, "el continent clarós que ignora el mal" (that continent of light which knows no evil). The poem, however, offers us a solution to the problem in the final tercet; there is the possibility that the Good, the Perfect, can be found in



both "you's" at the moment of sexual union ("l'ora tensa" — the moment of tension), illuminated by the mind's unerring light. It seems clear that this will happen at the moment when Pulchritudo and Voluptas are united by Love, when the Three Graces dance together in harmony, hand in hand. It seems appropriate here to mention an important adjective, "externs" (external) in the twelfth line. According to Neoplatonic theory — and here I'm thinking of Pico della Mirandola — if love wants to unite opposites perfectly, it must look Beyond, for if Love remains tied to the finite world, Passion and Beauty will remain in constant confrontation. Beauty and Pleasure come together only with this "external" element, looking outwards beyond the visible forms.<sup>11</sup> To paraphrase Plotinus, an author whom Foix is probably not familiar with first-hand, lovers do not love each other as long as they are distracted by a visible image; it is when their souls are possessed by an invisible force that they begin to love (*Eneades*, VI, vii, 33).

This is the dual theme of the sonnet which follows; the possibility of being governed by contradictory interpretations was considered by Plato in the second book of *The Republic* (375a and cc) and this poem presents, as well, two contrasting attitudes. Lovers are just as vulnerable to sensual and mislead-

<sup>11</sup>Josep Romeu i Figueras, who was kind enough to read my edition with care, in his own book proposes, in the abstract, changes in punctuation, which only spells out in a few rare cases. Until such time as he provides us with specific justification the changes he proposes, I must take exception to the punctuation changes he suggests for the thirteenth line of this poem; eliminating the comma at the end of the line makes it totally unclear that the subject of "burn" is "the Perfect" and that the place where it burns is "in you and me". The "Solc d'absolut d'una Alta Complacença" (Absolute Furrow of a Grand Complacency) is, on the other hand, also "in you and me" and, as a consequence, the whole line is parenthetical: the two commas are, therefore, necessary.



ing images as they are — “forgotten” and “external” — capable of perceiving the original “Instant”, that is, the higher world. The first quartet and the first tercet present these two contradicting attitudes (“meeting in misleading images” and “joining body and tears in innate skies”; as opposed to being a “frivolous appearance” and “a channel of fire in orchards and fields”), while the second quartet refers to the error of abandoning Mind in favor of the senses and, thus, of picking “false flowers”. The third tercet which is more optimistic, brings the two opposing ideas together via a Platonic contemplation of Christian Paradise (an allegorical place which he used in a similar poem, with, in fact, an almost identical pretext: “Amb ulls carnals opòs núvols i mars ...” — With carnal eyes I confront clouds and seas — ) where he presents the possibility of rising to higher knowledge through a sexual relationship.

The next poem, the fifth, is a clever variation of the classic maxim regarding the sadness which follows love. Here, however, sadness has become inertia, lack of activity of the flesh, to which all physical stimuli are denied in order to give full sway to those which will spur the consciousness towards the desired source of knowledge. Death, in the sixth line, calls to mind, among other possible though more cryptic associations, Pico della Mirandola's *Commento sopra una canzone d'amore composta da Girolamo Benivieni* where he speaks of two deaths in a relationship of love (III, viii); the first is the separation of body and soul through which the lover sees and possesses the beloved celestial Venus. If, however, he wishes to possess her more intimately, he must follow through with the second death, the definitive death. The neoplatonists dealt extensively with this idea of death drawing on Biblical and Platonic concepts. This type of union, then, this joining of Desire and Beauty through Love, is a crack of light in the earthly shadows. There is no

doubt that "reason" is "dead" (line 11), indicating to us the transcendental nature of this experience, yet is in a very earthly setting with clearly physical heartbeats. Nonetheless, the path has been opened and the Instant has acquired a certain transcendence. Finding themselves outside of time (which is another way of saying that the world of contingency has been left behind), the protagonists of the sonnet find themselves, through the perfection of their love and its effects upon them, freed from the limitations imposed on them by the senses.<sup>12</sup>

The tension existing between the two women in Raphael's painting and their irreconcilable opposing positions are resolved by Love's power to synthesize; this, I believe, is the theme of the last sonnet in the section. Love's power of synthesis does not eliminate the division of the lyric "I" — nor of the love object — into the two initial parts: the intellect and the senses. The two different qualities, however, mind and desire, are united in such a way that the more contingent of the two is incomplete without being propelled along the second. If we recognize that the verb of the first verse is not a preterite form of the verb "to see", but rather the third person singular in present indicative of the verb "to live", we understand the object of love in the first quartet — just at it was in the first poem of the series — to be a daemon, but a daemon who also possesses some physical attributes of the poet. And if it is true that these qualities as are such as "shell and hull", "golden husk" or "tattered rag of a body" it is just as true that the secret fruit can live outside this shell, "extern", in joyful union with the woman's intellect.

<sup>12</sup>There is an almost automatic temptation to identify "the other Element" in line fourteen as earth in order to complete water, fire and air. It is important to remember, however, that the poet speaks of pure and not mixed elements and that in Foix's work, the use of upper case is a stylistic device always referring to the Idea and not to the concrete.



These two faculties are joined, together offering contemplation and enjoyment of real Beauty in the first step towards the "Etern Permanent" (that which is permanent and eternal) which the poet speaks of in the final line. Mind and Desire are united at least in this last sonnet through Love, freeing the lyric "I" from the disturbing voices that call it back.<sup>13</sup>

This group of poems therefore deliberately follows a dialectic process. Each poem must be seen as one step towards the final solution where the flesh and the spirit dance in harmony, each achieving through this purification rite, liberation from its own ills (*Phaedrus*, 244e and cc).

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<sup>13</sup>Cf. *Banquet*, 211a-212a.